

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Cedarworks

Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Cedarworks Sees Huge Improvements with MEP Assistance

Client Profile:

Cedarworks was founded in 1981 in Rockport, Maine, as a regional manufacturer of swing sets, playsets and other backyard wood structures. Duncan Brown purchased the company in 1988 after gaining experience in manufacturing and sales in the woolen industry. In 1989, the business became a family affair. While Duncan worked to expand the company's manufacturing and sales functions, Duncan's wife, Susan, assisted in the marketing and general management of the business and helped develop Cedarworks' absolute commitment to customer satisfaction. Their son, Barrett, joined the business in 1997 and was named president in 2000. He has continued the commitment to superior customer service, and building the strongest, safest playsets on the market that offer more ways for kids to have fun. Cedarworks' product line has grown from two basic climbing structures to three play system product lines with 15 structures and numerous accessories. Sales have also expanded greatly and Cedarworks now sells swing sets and furniture to families in all 50 states and 20 foreign countries. Cedarworks presently has 45 employees.

Situation:

After attending a public offering of Timewise Lean 101, Kirby Kramer, Vice President of Cedarworks, became interested in what Lean Manufacturing could do for his company. Cedarworks' focus is on a very high quality product and the best possible customer service, but Kramer felt that there were probably opportunities for improvement at their manufacturing facility. The management at Cedarworks has a philosophy of always looking for a better way, better customer service, better quality as well as other improvements. Lean implementation fit right into their culture. Cedarworks' management contacted the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance with lean transformation.

Solution:

Cedarworks' 45 employees participated in Maine MEP's Timewise Lean 101 in order for all to understand the concepts behind Lean Manufacturing. A Value Stream Map of the manufacturing process from product receipt to wrapping for shipment was conducted, as well as a Value Stream Map of the Sales and Customer Service processes. Two Kaizen events were conducted as a result of the Value Stream Map process. One Kaizen event was a 5S of the raw material grading area and the other was a 5S of the shipping area. The Value Stream Map revealed a huge problem with the raw material being received and a problem with the flow of the material in the grading area. One of the suppliers was delivering cedar that resulted in 50 percent waste. It was also found that the flow in the grading area was resulting in excess material and employee travel.

Results:

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- * Increased first pass yield of wood grading process by 20 percent.
- * Reduced personnel travel distance by 70 percent per day (from 20,562 feet to 6,256 feet), which is equal to a reduction of 2.7 miles per day, a savings of 45 minutes a day.
- * Increased useable space by 580 square feet with removal of materials and equipment not in use.

Testimonial:

"As the premier manufacturer and seller of residential playsets, quality has always been Cedarworks' highest priority. Four years ago, we decided to develop an ISO-certifiable quality control system and looked to Maine MEP to help us work (successfully) toward this objective. When we subsequently decided to apply Lean Manufacturing concepts to our business, we looked again to Maine MEP for help. In an initial short, concise program at our manufacturing facility, literally every one of our employees was introduced to Lean Manufacturing concepts in an exercise which demonstrated to everyone that there were enormous benefits offered by thinking and acting "Lean." We later involved our Sales and Customer Service people in the program, and now find ourselves looking critically at our business activities and applying Lean Manufacturing thinking as we work to implement additional improvements in our operations and in the playsets we sell all over the world."

Kirby G. Kramer, Vice President of Finance and Operations